

Ten Point Action Plan

During the December 5 Oath of Office ceremony, Mayor Cheryl Cox outlined her ten point action plan:

1 I plan to ask our City Council to support an Independent Financial Review of the City's finances. We must first put our City's financial house in order if we are to accomplish the many projects that lie ahead and achieve our goals for our community. In order to make this request, it will be necessary to collect many of the questions that must be asked in order to frame the scope of this Review. The goal is to have in our sights the hurdles before we stumble over them, the gaps in paying for known costs in the immediate future, and an alignment between revenues and expenditures. We need an honest forecast of revenues and expenditures, a prioritization of city services to make sure that funding is adequate to provide for our community's core needs, and that retirement security is both affordable, achievable, and can be maintained.

2 I would like to extend my gratitude to Interim City Manager Jim Thompson before saying that hiring a permanent City Manager is our next priority. The search firm of Bob Murray & Associates has extended its search through this evening and plans to complete paper screening in order to provide the Council with more information about potential applicants on December 19. I hope that the Council will conduct interviews in early to mid-January.

3 I have asked that staff provide a Report Calendar to the City Council to make the Council formally apprised of the work in which staff is engaged and when to anticipate updates and reports.

4 "Development" and "Redevelopment" are often emotion-laden terms. I'd like to talk first about "development." The number of new homes constructed in Chula Vista was approximately 1,600 units last year. This is a 50% decline from 3,200 units in 2004. While the City's May 2006 forecast

indicates that 2,600 units will be built in 2007, only 730 units were permitted during the first six months of this year. Chula Vista could be in a situation in which perhaps the only thing worse than too much growth is too little growth. We must choose to do the hard work and ask the hard questions, for only then will we be able best to focus our collective energies and skill.

City revenues partially depend upon increasing home values and home sales, which drive up property tax revenues. If property values and sales decline, the ability to pay off substantial City-issued bonds can be at risk. We must be prepared for contingencies. Preparedness must be an explicit part of public disclosure. In short, our City Council must review the City's financial contingency plans, based upon levels of new homes and commercial/ industrial activities, if we are to think strategically in terms of contingency for the proverbial rainy day, and to know how the cycle of growth and bonding ends. This means asking that each department's operating budget be scrutinized in order to create additional capital improvement dollars for needed infrastructure, such as improving the condition of streets and roads throughout the City.

5 Redevelopment, when properly accomplished, enjoys increased citizen participation in decision-making, a commitment to downtown revitalization, and an emphasis on improving the quality of life. It allows, and encourages people to seek a sense of community, of belonging, and of history. Redevelopment is not "sameness." If it is not suburban malls or urban entertainment centers, we might ask what it is that makes it real? What is it that means "community character?" I don't have the only answers to these questions, and it is certain that my answers might not be someone else's answers. What I do know is that the discussion of redevelopment in our City has, at the very least, been testy. What should have been a zoning guide has become a tug of war.

I propose a short breathing period in which our City Council seeks to involve a person or persons with no certain stake, investment, or future intent of investment in our historic downtown, in looking at our City's Urban Core Specific Plan from the viewpoint of marketability. Armed with market facts, perhaps then we (elected officials, staff, residents, and businesspersons) can ask the questions that will lead us to work together to overcome our problems and to achieve mutually agreeable goals of making Chula Vista better, greater, and more attractive for residents and visitors.

- 6** I have given some thought to hosting five or six non-political, wholly informative, "lectures," for want of a better term, to help us all understand the complex terminology and factors related to how California cities finance themselves. Guest speakers would discuss a topic specific to municipal finance, one that could be "played" in any California incorporated city-addressing, for example, "tax increment financing," "development impact fees," and "community maintenance agreements." If this outreach is successful, then staff, elected officials, businesspeople, and residents will have a common, and better understanding of the framework for open and honest discussions that are part of people working together on their City's future.
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- 7** The opening of H Street to San Diego Bay is a must if we are to provide our residents with visual and physical access to the Bayfront. We are well-positioned to enter into the next level of formal discussions with Gaylord. If negotiated well, this project can bring not only visitors to our community, but can allow Chula Vistans to explore this resort ourselves as we dine in its restaurants and stroll through the shops. Our residents have been denied access to the Bayfront for too long. It is time that the people of Chula Vista be able to enjoy a waterfront walk and time with their families in a phenomenal indoor and outdoor setting.

- 8** Locating a complete University of California campus within our University Park might be out of reach for now; however, attracting a UC school, such as a School of Engineering, Pharmacology or a Veterinary Science School, to Chula Vista can be great boosts to educational opportunity in the area. I plan to work with members of the community and the region to promote these, and other, four-year educational opportunities within Chula Vista.
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- 9** SR-125, we hope, will alleviate the syndrome in which traffic, like water, follows the path of least resistance. We hope that when the South Bay Expressway opens in June that many of our residents actively use the Tollway instead of city streets.
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- 10** Good commercial investment adds additional sales tax revenue to City coffers. It makes possible public access and the filling of community needs. New projects such as the Eastern Urban Center, the car dealerships on Otay Valley Road, and the Otay Ranch Mall are encouraging. Sales tax dollars from these businesses and from long-established and other new businesses throughout the City are used to support needed City services. Please do your Christmas shopping in Chula Vista this year, and make your sales tax dollar work for you, right here in Chula Vista.